

# **Expectations for the 2023 UHC Political Declaration** **from a Planetary Health Perspective**

(Prepared based on “Rev2: Political Declaration of the High-level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage (draft of 2023 UHC Political Declaration)”)

## **High-level meeting and political declaration on the health sector to be held in conjunction with the UN General Assembly:**

The UN General Assembly will be held in New York in September 2023. In conjunction with the UN General Assembly, a High-Level Meeting (HLM) is scheduled to be held for three health areas: Tuberculosis, UHC (Universal Health Coverage), and PPPR (Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness and Response).

The UHC High-Level Meeting was also held at the 74th session of the UN General Assembly in 2019, which also adopted the UHC Political Declaration. The 2019 Declaration included a description of the impacts such as climate change on human health, as well as a description of adaptation measures to reduce those impacts, but there was no mention of mitigation measures. Although the Political Declaration is a non-legally binding document, it is an important milestone for governments to recognize its importance at the UN General Assembly, to confirm their views, and to promote measures in their countries. It also serves as an important guideline for international organizations and UN agencies to promote international measures in the future.

In Prime Minister Kishida's speech at the 77th UN General Assembly General Debate on September 20, 2022, he expressed his commitment to "the promotion of efforts based on the concept of human security in the new era" along with security and the rule of law to realize the principles of the UN and multilateralism, and in his speech, he stated that in a world where issues such as climate change are interconnected and increasingly complex, he will take a leading role in achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC) in the post-COVID-19 era.

The UN High-Level Meeting on UHC, which will take place on September 21, 2023, has set its theme as “Universal Health Coverage: expanding our ambition for health and well-being in a post-COVID world”. The Japanese government has promoted the international promotion of UHC as an important diplomatic issue, and in May 2022, it also launched a "Global Health Strategy," with UHC as a central agenda item.

We recommend that the Japanese government, as the presidency of the G7 Hiroshima Summit in 2023, compile an ambitious political declaration that includes a planetary health perspective to further promote UHC and improve the health of human society, as well as a paradigm shift in the health system to address global issues such as climate change, loss of biodiversity, and environmental pollution. Therefore, we recommend amendments to the following six paragraphs.

## Recommended revisions to the draft of 2023 UHC Political Declaration:

### [1] PP15

Recognize the consequences of the adverse impacts of climate change, natural disasters, extreme weather events, as well as other environmental determinants of health, such as clean air, safe drinking water, sanitation, and secure shelter, on health and, in this regard, underscore the need to foster health in **climate change adaptation efforts**, underlining that resilient and **people-centred health systems** are necessary to protect the health of all people,

#### Suggestions:

1. **Adding “In view of the interdependent relationship between planetary health and human health” in the beginning of the section.**
2. **Instead of “climate change adaptation efforts,” to write “climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts”.**
3. **Change “people-centred health systems” to “people-centred and environmentally sustainable health systems”**

#### Reasons:

- The Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) indicates that climate change is anthropogenically driven resulting in changes in temperature, ecosystems, and biodiversity that have a significant impact on human society. We must be aware of the impact of environmental factors on human health, as well as the magnitude of human impact on the environment. In addition, in addressing health issues, it is important in terms of disease prevention and health promotion to take adaptation measures as well as mitigation measures to prevent global warming, which is the cause of the health problem. Finally, when considered from a planetary health perspective, not just the human-centered development, but measures that focus on both human and Earth health are essential to promote human health.

### [2] OP45

Promote and implement policy, legislative, regulatory and fiscal measures, as appropriate, to prioritize health promotion, health literacy and disease prevention at all levels, aiming at minimizing the exposure to **main risk factors of non-communicable diseases, including tobacco**, and promote healthy diets and lifestyles, as well as physical activity, consistent with national policies, noting that price and tax measures can be an effective means to reduce consumption and related health costs and represent a potential revenue stream for financing for development in many countries, recognizing that investing in prevention is often more cost-effective when compared to the cost of treatment and care; (Source: Based on A/RES/74/2, Paragraphs 27 & 44)

#### Suggestions:

1. **Change “main risk factors of non-communicable diseases, including tobacco” into “main risk factors of non-communicable diseases, including tobacco, air pollution and non-optimal temperature”**

#### Reasons:

- The Global Burden of Disease Study (GBD) assesses risk factors associated with mortality, and when considering environmental exposure factors for non-communicable diseases, global environment-related factors such as air pollution and non-optimal temperatures, similar to tobacco, are also considered as lethal health problems for humanity. The use of fossil fuels is one of the main contributors to air pollution and non-optimal temperatures, and it is necessary to promote countermeasures through policies, legislations, regulations, and financial measures.

**[3] PP43**

Recognize that a coherent approach to strengthen the global health architecture as well as health system resilience and universal health coverage are central for effective and sustainable prevention, preparedness, and response to **pandemics and other public health emergencies**, and recognize also the value of a **One Health approach** that fosters cooperation between the human health, animal health and plant health, as well as environmental and other relevant sectors and that strengthening early warning and response systems contribute to health system resilience; (Source:WHA76.4 PP4 + A/RES/77/275 PP15)

**Suggestions:**

1. **Change “pandemics and other public health emergencies” into “pandemics and other public health emergencies, including health impacts caused by climate change,”.**
2. **Change “One Health approach” into “One Health and Planetary Health approach”.**

**Reasons:**

- The One Health approach is a joint initiative of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and the World Health Organization (WHO), and these four organizations have signed an agreement to promote a sustainable balance and optimization of human, animal, plant and environmental health. While it includes environmental health, the primary focus remains on the control of infectious diseases. Three pathways are modeled as human impacts from environmental change: direct impacts (floods, heavy rains, heat waves), ecosystem-derived impacts (infectious diseases, crop harvesting, mental health), and indirect impacts (loss of livelihoods, conflicts due to migration), as measures to include aspects other than infectious diseases, the Planetary Health approach is important and should be incorporated as well.

**[4] OP8**

Scale up efforts to build and strengthen quality, **people-centred, sustainable and climate resilient health systems** and enhance their performance by improving patient safety and by promoting coherent national, regional and local policies and strategies for quality and safe health services, noting that universal health coverage can only be achieved if the services and medical products are safe and effective and are delivered in a timely, equitable, efficient and integrated manner; (Source: based on A/RES/74/2 Paragraph 48)

**Suggestions:**

1. **Change “people-centred, sustainable and climate resilient health systems” into “people-centred, environmentally sustainable and climate resilient health systems”.**

**Reasons:**

- The Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) indicates that climate change is anthropogenically driven resulting in changes in temperature, ecosystems, and biodiversity that have a significant impact on human society. We must be aware of the impact of environmental factors on human health, as well as the magnitude of human impact on the environment. When considered from a planetary health perspective, to promote human health, not just the human-centered development, but measures that focus on both human and Earth health are essential.

**[5] OP52**

Enhance emergency health preparedness and response systems, as well as strengthen capacities at national, regional and international levels, including to mitigate the impacts of climate change and natural disasters on health, while stressing the need to enhance coordination, coherence, and integration between disaster and health risk management systems including at the local levels; (Source: A/RES/74/2 Paragraph 74 + A/RES/77/289 Paragraph 25)

**Suggestions:**

- 1. Change “to mitigate the impacts of climate change and natural disasters on health” into “to minimize the impacts of climate change and natural disasters on health using adaptation measures”**

**Reasons:**

- Adaptation measures to reduce the health effects of climate change and natural disasters as well as mitigation measures to prevent global warming, the cause of climate change and natural disasters, are important in terms of disease prevention and health promotion.

**[6] OP53**

Enhance cooperation at the local, national, regional and global levels through a One Health approach, including through health system strengthening, capacity-building, including for research and regulatory capacity, and technical support and ensure equitable access to affordable, safe, effective and quality existing and new antimicrobial medicines, vaccines and diagnostics as well as effective and integrated stewardship and surveillance to improve the prevention, monitoring, detection, and control of zoonotic diseases and pathogens, threats to health and ecosystems, the emergence and spread of antimicrobial resistance, and future health emergencies, by fostering cooperation and a coordinated approach between human health, animal health and plant health, as well as environmental and other relevant sectors, and urge Member States to adopt an all-hazard, multisectoral and coordinated approach to prevention, preparedness and response for health emergencies, and encourage the Quadripartite Organizations, consisting of the World Health Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the World Organization for Animal Health and the United Nations Environment Programme, to build on and strengthen their existing cooperation, including to implement their One Health Joint Plan of Action (2022–2026); (Source: Based on A/RES/74/2 Paragraph 76 + A/RES/76/257 OP16)

**Suggestions:**

- 1. Change “One Health approach” into “One Health and Planetary Health approach”.**

**Reasons:**

- The One Health approach is a joint initiative of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and the World Health Organization (WHO), and these four organizations have signed an agreement to promote a sustainable balance and optimization of human, animal, plant and environmental health. While it includes environmental health, the primary focus remains the control of infectious diseases. Three pathways are modeled as human impacts from environmental change: direct impacts (floods, heavy rains, heat waves), ecosystem-derived impacts (infectious diseases, crop harvesting, mental health), and indirect impacts (loss of livelihoods, conflicts due to migration), as measures to include aspects other than infectious diseases, the Planetary Health approach is important and should be incorporated as well.